Wittgenstein's later philosophy and "pictures" of mixed-method research in psychology: a critical investigation of theories and accounts of methodological plurality

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Abstract

Wittgenstein's philosophical method and later writings help psychologists to identify and work through "pictures" evoked and used in our linguistic practices especially when these representations appear to be self-evident and they promote fundamental misconceptions. This paper applies Wittgenstein's later philosophy to theories and accounts of combinations of quantitative and qualitative methods in psychology, many of which have now been extended to mixtures of qualitative methods with contrasting theoretical assumptions. In contrast to pragmatist, realist and social constructionist stances, a Wittgensteinian approach examines metatheoretical and metamethodological pictures of methodological plurality in a treatment of issues that are traditionally explored in terms of epistemological, ontological, interpretative and paradigm differences. Arguments that Wittgenstein's work can strengthen existing forms of personal, methodological and deconstructive reflexivity in psychological research practices are exemplified with a specific example of combining psychosocial and discursive qualitative methods.

Keywords: Wittgenstein, pragmatism, paradigms, realism, methodological plurality, mixed-methods

Wittgenstein's philosophical method and particularly his later writings have helped some psychologists to identify and work through "pictures" evoked and used in our linguistic practices. The so-called "private language argument," for example, is an extended conceptual challenge to the notion that psychological first-person words are names for private, inner objects such as sensations, feelings and emotions (Harré, 2006). An analogous image-based and simple representation is evoked by Wittgenstein (1953) in highlighting the source of the error: he discusses whether a group of people could refer to private or inner feelings in a way that resembles trying to describe something called a "beetle" which is in a box that only one person can look into. The crucial point is that if the word beetle has a use in the language of these people "it would not be used as the name of a thing. The thing in the box has no place in the language-game at all; not even as a *something*: for the box might even be empty" (p. 100). Dismantling this simple image-based explanation of how first person language functions is important because a host of misleading explanations collapse along with it (e.g., saying that I *know* I am in pain but I can only ever *infer* pain in others).

Further pictures abound not only in everyday life but also in the specialised language games of psychologists talking about their theories and methods. Thoughts about communication, for example, often reflect a misleading view that information is being transferred from the head of one individual to another (i.e., a "conduit" metaphor; Reddy, 1993). Theoretical positions in psychology can similarly evoke or be built around a picture in order to communicate a clear understanding of complex conceptual relations. For example, talk about reflexivity in psychology, such as the inescapably "self-referential quality of theory" (Morawski, 2005, p. 79) when humans are the "objects" of study, can lead solutions to be pictured as available at a "second

order," "meta-" or "higher" level in a hierarchy of abstract theorization. An alternative, but misleading picture is to consider the type of reflexivity mentioned by Morawski to be a pernicious problem with psychology's very foundations (e.g., Flanagan, 1981). Critical examination of issues considered to be central to psychology from the perspective of Wittgenstein's (1953, 1979) later philosophy can use the underexamined notion of pictures along with his method and specific writings to achieve clarity and overcome the temptation to think a given problem *must be seen in this way*.

In this paper, I will take the somewhat unusual step of focusing on representations of mixed method research or methodological pluralism as the key issue in need of clarification. Methodological pluralism, as I shall outline below, is an appropriate topic because what psychologists are tempted to say about mixing methods incorporates implicit, simple pictures and representations in related metatheoretical justifications and metamethodological reflections. I argue that engaging with Wittgenstein's later work from within psychology constitutes a potentially useful form of self-critical or reflexive investigation. By reflexive I mean any genuinely self-critical attempt by an individual or community of psychologists to use the theories, concepts and methods of their own and preferably other disciplines to examine relevant concepts and practices in psychology, identify conceptual errors, highlight taken-for-granted assumptions, and suggest alternative possibilities for psychology in theory and practice. This contrasts with other meanings of reflexivity in psychology such as the potential for paradox when a theory (e.g., of creativity) is applied to one's own work and found wanting (i.e., I cannot *explain myself*). Reflexivity as used here also differs from the concept of the active inclusion of subjectivity (e.g., of the researcher) in psychological research rather than its reduction

or elimination (e.g., as a source of bias that reduces objectivity) as an appropriate *reflexive scientific attitude* (Gough & Madill, 2012). While there is much that is valuable in Gough and Madill's stance, my main aim with regard to reflexivity is to show how Wittgenstein's methods have enduring relevance for a wide range of conceptual issues generated in the everyday activities of psychologists.

The preoccupation with method in psychology as the principle means to understand better the nature of psychological objects is an ongoing problem. Wittgenstein (1953) famously pointed out that in psychology "the existence of the experimental method makes us think we have the means of solving the problems which trouble us, though problem and method pass one another by" (p. 232). Accordingly, methodological plurality can only ever be a partial solution to the enduring conceptual problems of psychology; especially those caused by methodocentrism. Yanchar, Slife and Warne (2008) argue, for instance, that many mainstream critical thinking strategies in psychology "combine scientific analytic reasoning with other critical thinking approaches, but never depart substantially from the overriding disciplinary concern of method-centered scholarship" (p. 266). Psychology's "emphasis on method and method-based reasoning" (p. 266) is remarkably persistent because it appears to represent the means by which objective descriptions and coherent explanations can be produced. Even when mixed quantitative and qualitative approaches are used by an individual or research team, there is still the potential for innovations to be considered within a restricted and hegemonic conception of critical thinking; that is, a view of critical thinking in which theories are examined against a quantitative and experimental evidence base in contrast to the broader type of highly conceptual and theoretical critical thinking found in theoretical psychology. The ultimate effect may therefore be to include,

normalise, and strip qualitative methods of their more critical and theory-driven features while simultaneously reducing any role for reflexive theoretical work. For this reason it is important to highlight how Wittgenstein's philosophy has a valuable role to play in encouraging critical reflection on the issue of combining methods in psychology.

A further reason for focusing on methodological plurality is that less attention is being paid to conceptual and metatheoretical issues as combining quantitative and qualitative methods gains widespread acceptance and ideas of mixed methods are now being extended to the use of different qualitative methods in research. This latter trend is evident also in the emerging use of qualitative meta-analysis or meta-synthesis in specific domains of psychological research (e.g., health and psychotherapy research; Sandelowski, Barroso & Volis, 2007; Shaw, 2011). In a negative parallel development, there is evidence also that even the limited sense of reflexivity in which qualitative researchers reflect upon and understand self-involvement in qualitative research is not being included and addressed thoroughly in published articles (Newton, Rothlingova, Gutteridge, LeMarchand & Raphael, 2012). Thus while metatheoretical investigations can appear to invite unresolvable arguments about fundamental theoretical commitments, we should not avoid asking difficult theoretical and philosophical questions even as the use of new combinations of differing psychological methods increases in popularity.

The argument in this paper proceeds by providing further details in the first section about the nature of Wittgenstein's later philosophical period. A Wittgensteinian approach is outlined so that it is clear how it contrasts with pragmatist, realist and social constructionist stances on methodological plurality. Further details are provided about how examining pictures—understood in terms of

Wittgenstein's later philosophy and as an underexamined feature of his philosophical method—coincides with self-critical work on methodological plurality as it is carried out by psychologists. In the second section, the Wittgensteinian identification and working through of pictures of methodological plurality focuses initially on combinations of quantitative and qualitative approaches promoted as being consistent with philosophical pragmatism (Moran, 2007). The third section examines combinations of qualitative methods and explores how triangulation practices evoke realist pictures of methodological pluralism. Section four examines forms of reflexivity mentioned in particular qualitative approaches and their relevance to critical examinations of qualitative mixed-method research. In section five, specific remarks from Wittgenstein on one of Freud's psychoanalytic interpretations are compared favourably with arguments from Frosh and Emerson (2005) about combining discursive and psychosocial interpretations in multi-method qualitative research.

Wittgensteinian philosophy and self-critical work in psychology

The central argument outlined here is that Wittgenstein's (1953, 1979) later work, respectively, in the *Philosophical Investigations* and *On Certainty* provides an important means of representing the complex relations between the concepts of plurality and reflexivity as they are used in relation to the methods of psychology. Although the central differences cannot be addressed in this paper, my critical reflexive approach using Wittgenstein's remarks and method is not the same as Ashmore's (1989) discursive sociology of scientific knowledge, nor does it closely follow Bourdieu's (2004) social capital analysis of science. Nevertheless, it is consistent with much of the work that Wittgensteinian philosophers (and psychologists who have engaged with his work) have devoted to investigate

conceptual features of methodological and empirical issues in psychology (e.g., Racine & Müller, 2009). On this view, Wittgenstein's later philosophical writings are potentially useful to any psychologist who wants to make sense of theoretical, analytical, subjective and personal doubts about their research (Sullivan, 2002). Wittgenstein's continued relevance to psychology is demonstrated by Harré and Tissaw's (2005) practical guide to Wittgenstein's work and Bennett and Hacker's (2003) Wittgensteinian account of the philosophical foundations of neuroscience. Extension of Wittgenstein's method to the consideration of contemporary problems in psychology shows also that are no reasons, in principle, why the philosophical foundations of qualitative psychology and methodological pluralism in psychology cannot also be examined in a critical inquiry. Furthermore, they demonstrate that Wittgenstein's philosophical methods should not be equivocated with discursive psychology and social constructionism, despite important connections between Wittgenstein's philosophy, discursive psychology (Potter, 2010) and social constructionism (Harré, 2004; cf. Hibberd, 2005).

But how is it possible for Wittgenstein's work to help contemporary researchers to be self-critical and to achieve clarity on the issue of methodological plurality? An extensive exegetical literature in philosophy has emerged to interpret and explain the significance of Wittgenstein's critical remarks on a range of topics in psychology (i.e., as it existed in the early to mid-twentieth century). This exegetical work counters the misconception that engaging with Wittgenstein's philosophical method from the perspective of psychology means adopting a social constructionist or discursive psychology and their respective positions on epistemology, ontology and methodology. Wittgenstein's philosophical approach does not endorse a particular philosophical framework such as pragmatism, realism or social constructionism for

psychology. Moreover, there are good reasons for thinking that a coherent Wittgensteinian reworking of positions on science such as Kuhn's (1962) paradigm account can highlight issues of importance within psychology and its positioning with regard to the social and natural sciences (e.g., see Read, 2012).

However, philosophers such as Read and some psychologists are highly critical of the use of theories in psychology and the social sciences, particularly where these create distance between the researcher and their subject matter. Such an anti-theoretical use of Wittgenstein is employed by Shotter and Katz (1996) in their attempts to be reflexive from within a practice. They describe Wittgenstein's philosophy as a method of "social poetics" which can generate additional knowledge and insights when used alongside existing practices. Katz and Shotter (1996a, 1996b) demonstrated this approach in an experimental mentoring program in a medical school, which introduced a new dialogical practice into medical training, and in a practice where a "cultural broker" was included in diagnostic interviews so that relational and responsive listening could lead doctors to better hear their "patient's voice". Despite the positive effects of the Wittgenstein-inspired social poetics approach in practice, it is still important to recognise that Wittgenstein engaged in a different activity to the work of the people and practitioners he commented upon (even though he also may have shared similar experiences such as trying to describe an emotional experience). It is therefore misleading to present Wittgenstein's philosophical method as something that can be taken from philosophy and inserted into the practices of psychology to complement, or worse, compete directly against both experimental methods *and* forms of qualitative inquiry (Sullivan, 2000, 2002).

Wittgenstein (1953) was very clear when he noted that using philosophical methods to examine theoretical and conceptual issues in psychology did not mean that

he was doing the work of psychologists (or, for that matter, mathematicians) when he examined and compared the concepts used in both practices. Thus, Wittgenstein's philosophical methods can be used within psychology and the social sciences to achieve clarity—and this might be called doing theoretical or critical psychology—but this does not mean that Wittgenstein's methods improve upon or replace those used in the practice of interest. From a Wittgensteinian perspective, experimental and quantitative methods are not always inherently misguided; rather conceptual errors can arise or become consolidated by their inappropriate use in or extension to all instances of social and psychological investigation.

This demarcation and delimitation of philosophy from science might ostensibly appear to be consistent with a critical realist perspective in which Wittgenstein's philosophical method has little to contribute to science. Haig (2008), for instance, describes conceptual investigations of the type carried out by philosophers like Wittgenstein as "a form of 'grammatical therapy' carried out on theories" (p. 565) and notes that this is "not a distinctive feature of scientific method" (p. 565). Instead, he argues that "the most appropriate way to enrich scientific method is to better theorize about our existing theories of scientific method and to construct new theories of method" (Haig, 2008, p. 565). Engaging with this view is important because one of Haig's further aims is to establish a scientific realist basis upon which the qualitative method of grounded theory can have a scientific status that is on par with the methods of the natural sciences. This can only happen, according to Haig, if psychological researchers accept that they must generate and test abductive theories of underlying mechanisms (i.e., inference to the best explanation).

On Haig's view, Wittgensteinian philosophical concepts such as language games and forms of life could only contribute to psychology if they were developed

fully as theories of methods and not certainly not by showing how even theories based on abductive methods might create conceptual errors. Shotter and Katz's anti-theoretical perspective is somewhat different and appears to complement Wittgenstein's focus on the details of linguistic practices. A central message of Shotter and Katz's (1996) work is to show that new knowledge resources and creative discursive practices and can emerge without being solely theoretical: "Wittgenstein wants to divert us from describing our particular, practical activities as we think they must be (in theory)" (p. 926). However, detailed examples of the language games where mundane as well as abstract concepts *and* particular methods are used can also be assembled in order to produce a perspicuous view (or surview) of their use, misuse and misrepresentation. Wittgenstein uses the concept of language game to highlight mistaken views of how language is actually used and it helps to engage with and work through conceptual problems that arise in very particular practical, research and theoretical tasks.

Hutchinson and Read (2008) demonstrate the surview approach by attempting a *perspicuous presentation* of uses of the phrase "perspicuous presentation" and related practices of conceptual clarification in Wittgenstein's philosophy. The point is not to invite self-referential inconsistency (i.e., reflexive paradox) or to encourage general doubt, but rather to show that there are important differences between elucidatory (positive) and therapeutic (negative) readings of Wittgenstein's philosophical method. An elucidatory stance attempts to create an overview of a particular domain of language and practice; such as singular and plural usages of psychological concepts in the first-person, second-person and third-person in practical contexts (e.g., when alone or with others). The therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein's philosophy is that his method helps us mostly—as individuals rather than in teams—

to work through misrepresentations of the use of language that are connected with pictures interwoven into our linguistic practices, and which often manifest themselves in what we are tempted to say about what we do in practices (i.e., in explanations and ultimately empty evocative gestures that Wittgenstein identifies as unhelpful or nonsensical). From this view, achieving clarity superficially resembles ridding oneself of a psychological problem (e.g., akin to treating obsessive thinking) and appears to leave one in a position in which the conceptual problem is successfully treated (unless, of course, it returns in a new guise). Wittgenstein realized this in his own case by critiquing his earlier pictorial view or theory of language in the "Tractatus Logical-Philosophicus"; for in that book published in 1922 he stated: "The general form of propositions is: This is how things are" (cited in Wittgenstein, 1953, p. 48). Commenting on his own work several decades later, he wrote: "A *picture* held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably" (p. 48).

While Wittgenstein undoubtedly examines the use of words in mundane *and* highly abstract contexts, he also noted that words and phrases often evoked pictures that seem to underlie and guide correct use. We have already seen how the name-object picture of language is fundamentally mistaken when incorporated into accounts of first-person psychological language (e.g., in attempts to capture what we are doing when we describe "inner" experiences of pain, emotions, etc.). When Wittgenstein writes about pictures these are, of course, not necessarily private or personal ways of seeing the world (i.e., images). The focus is not on instances of pattern creation that we cognitively impose upon the world (e.g., that stand out in random ink blots), but pictures can occur and be used when talking about particular phenomena. In such cases they might have a primarily visual form that could be drawn and explained to

others (e.g., as formalized in a diagram) but this should not be taken to mean that they are testable representations of the essence of a phenomenon (i.e., that they are only useful if they truly correspond with states of affairs in the world). The aim of investigating pictures in contemporary psychology, therefore, is not to claim that they have precedence over language, but rather to examine how their multiplicity of uses are thoroughly intertwined with specific linguistic and rhetorical practices.

Wittgenstein also analysed pictures embedded in epistemic practices and held in place as everyday certainties by their surroundings. For example, he remarked that: "The picture of the earth as a ball is a good picture, it proves itself everywhere, it is also a simple picture—in short, we work with it without doubting it" (Wittgenstein, 1979, p. 22). Accordingly, pictures are not inherently good or bad, correct or incorrect, but they may be subject to philosophical investigation when they misrepresent linguistic practices. They may also be refined according to the needs of specific scientific practices. For example, stating that the earth is in fact an oblate ellipsoid is important for specific practices such as accurately mapping the globe and calculating the area of the earth. Wittgenstein (1979) also acknowledged that what he called a "world-picture" might provide the background to practices such as Lavoisier's experiments with substances and description of what takes place during burning. In that case, Wittgenstein's point was that a world picture is learned as a child and for this reason "it is the matter-of-course foundation for his research and as such also goes unmentioned" (p. 24e). However, despite the ostensibly similar use of "worldview" in Moran's (2007) overview of paradigm (Kuhn, 1962) approaches to mixed methods research in psychology, this concept will not play a major role in the Wittgensteinian analysis that follows.

It is important that concepts such as Wittgenstein's (1953) description of a simple language game—or even paradigm according to Read's (2012) Wittgensteinian take on Kuhn and science—are used within a practice to highlight unexamined features. Moreover, the aim of a Wittgensteinian stance is, as Hutchinson and Read (2008) demonstrate with their examination of the concept of "perspicuous representation" in Wittgenstein's writings, to work through and clarify their use. This therapeutic approach may—quite wrongly as will be argued below—appear to correspond with Haig's (2005) largely negative account mentioned earlier:

> The clarifications offered are, when read through the hermeneutic of therapy, clarifications in the achievement sense. That is to say, they only serve as clarifications if our interlocutor recognises them as such, and thus, they lead him to see other pictures as equally valid as the one that has hitherto held him in thrall and led him to his seemingly insurmountable philosophical problem. (Hutchinson & Read, 2008, pp. 156-157).

After working through a picture (or pictures) internal to a linguistic practice that either causes or supports conceptual problems, the result can free a practitioner to explore alternative pictures and new approaches. In addition, a resource is created that may assist others to find clarity. Debates about realism and constructionism in psychology, for example, are an obvious testing ground when the common but misleading picture being discussed is how language is or is not isomorphic with "the world" (cf. Potter and Hepburn, 2008).

As the next section will show, Wittgenstein's philosophical method can help to work through pictures in psychology in such activities as using different methods to triangulate representations of objective reality. Wittgenstein's approach is contrasted

with uses of Kuhn's (1962) paradigm account of science to understand different theoretical frameworks for mixed methods research in psychology.

Theoretical frameworks and pictures of mixed quantitative and qualitative methods

Discussion of methodological plurality in psychology generally refers to combining quantitative and qualitative methods but is increasingly mentioned with regard to the combined use of different qualitative methods. At this point, an extended historical reconstruction of the marginalization of qualitative methods and their gradual, but arguably still restricted, inclusion in psychology is not required (see Madill & Gough (2008) and Walsh-Bowers (2002) for discussion of relevant issues). Changed attitudes are evident in descriptions of the use of more sophisticated accounts of mixed methodological research (e.g., see Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) which contrast with earlier either-or views of qualitative and quantitative methods. For example, in 1998 Tashakkori and Teddlie described an emerging tolerance for methodological diversity in the human sciences as signifying the end of the "paradigm wars". They argued that disagreement between adherents of quantitative and qualitative methods has reduced as attention has shifted from issues of incompatibility and meta-level debate to the development of a pragmatic and strategic stance. Furthermore, they highlighted what they felt was a "growing agreement among many social and behavioural scientists concerning the basic assumptions that underlie the philosophical orientation of pragmatism" (p. 17).

The potential for qualitative psychologists to become as methodocentric as their quantitative colleagues can be challenged by acknowledging Valsiner's (2000) point that numerical representations of social and psychological phenomena are generated through qualitative processes. Widespread acceptance that quantitative data

are qualitative should foster recognition that, at least within a given mixed-method project, "lingering affiliations to either a quantitative or qualitative research approach can inhibit the mixed methods researcher's inclination to combine and make the most of the two sets of findings" (Bryman, 2007, p. 13). Acceptance should also challenge the manner in which differences between quantitative and qualitative methods are maintained in the research process through choices about the timing of each component. For example, a sequence of qualitative interviews followed by scale construction and quantitative testing can reinforce the view that qualitative methods are only useful for exploratory work in relatively new domains of psychological research. A further advantage of recognition of the qualitative nature of quantitative data collection and analysis would be a greater openness to richer and more realistic accounts of the decisions that quantitative researchers make at every step in the research process; that is, including narratives which are currently hidden in published reconstructions of research according to deeply engrained report-writing conventions.

In a bolder stance, Mason (2006) outlines a "qualitatively driven" approach to mixing methods although even here there is an attempt to subvert the qualitative-quantitative divide by emphasising "multi-dimensional research strategies" (p. 10) which combine largely macro (quantitative) and micro (qualitative) dimensions "governed by the questions that drive the research" (p. 14). This implies a realist picture of research as "gold mining" in which quantitative research indiscriminately surveys a given territory to reveal promising finds, but only qualitative research methods can eventually find valuable "nuggets" of data. Mason also notes that "a questioning, reflexive and non-accepting approach to research design and practice" (p. 21) must be extended "by questioning and being reflexive about the qualitative paradigm itself" (p. 21). This continued advocacy of a broad reflexivity as "an

important principle for mixed-method working" (p. 21) is very different to Tashakkori and Teddlie's (1998) pragmatist stance which seems to be designed to end further critical and potentially divisive reflection and theorizing. Following the stance outlined in this paper, reflexivity should extend to highlighting implicit pictures that reinforce the appeal and legitimacy of any given combination of quantitative and qualitative methods.

A similar position is adopted in Madill and Gough (2008) as they use different senses of Kuhn's (1962) concept of paradigm to examine the positioning of qualitative methods in psychological science. One of their aims is to show that recognition of pluralism in qualitative research maintains "an appropriately complex picture of qualitative research in psychology" (p. 255). The resulting table of *data collection* and *data analysis* methods (which they treat as separately in contrast to the combined examination of several traditions of qualitative *data collection and analysis* below), uses Moran's (2007) paradigm analysis to understand a range of stances that address pluralism in the use of qualitative methods as well as in combination with quantitative methods. The resulting four paradigms could be used by qualitative psychologists to attain some clarity about their stance on methodological pluralism: eclecticism, utilitarianism, specialism, fragmentation and pragmatism. The use of paradigm is a key means of framing and focusing upon how qualitative and quantitative approaches can be combined. Madill and Gough (2008) favour pragmatism as an integrative approach showing "promise as a coherent position claiming the middle ground between paradigm incommensurability and paradigm complementarity" (p. 264). However, they also recognize the enduring appeal of realism over pragmatism: "many researchers may want to retain the goal, at least, of

obtaining true and accurate, as opposed to (merely) workable, knowledge of the world" (p. 264).

Moran-Ellis et al. (2006) highlight one of the central concerns of pragmatism: the use of quantitative and qualitative methods by an individual or team provides methodological triangulation. Triangulation, they note, "is an epistemological claim concerning what more can be known about a phenomenon when the findings from data generated by two or more methods are brought together" (p. 47). Convergent findings can be taken to reflect the same dimensions of the phenomenon under investigation, while divergence might also reflect the complexity of psychological and social phenomena (i.e., it might indicate multifaceted dimensions). Exploring the details of triangulation and related pictures that tend to capture its appeal for quantitative-qualitative research is an alternative approach to analysing paradigm-based differences. As the next sections will show, what may be surprising to researchers who combine qualitative approaches is that the temptation to implicitly accept a realist picture still needs to be challenged. The surprise also for some readers will be that Wittgenstein's engagement with examples of Freudian psychoanalytic shows how specific pictures can be identified and challenged even when quite different qualitative approaches are combined.

Pluralistic use of qualitative methods: reflexivity, triangulation and realist tendencies

Different qualitative approaches have contrasting epistemological and ontological commitments connected with post-positivism, phenomenalism, feminism, hermeneutics, critical theory, post-structuralism, social constructionism or critical realism. However, when practitioners of qualitative research are faced with the possibilities of combining different approaches the response is often not to attempt a

grand philosophical overview (cf. Clarke et al.'s (2014) meta-study approach). Rather, choosing which methods and frameworks to combine is both arbitrary *and* determined by the phenomenon, research question, the skills and inclinations of the individual researcher and research team. With methodological pluralism also referring now to the use of two (or more) qualitative methods in a research programme (cf. Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998), it is important to see whether a Wittgensteinian analysis helps to understand particular combinations of methods and how practitioners negotiate, justify and reflect on them. In general terms, this reflexivity is central to qualitative research because the alternative view of an independent world is rejected. While it is encumbent on qualitative mixed-method researchers to "explore the ways in which a researcher's involvement with a particular study influences, acts upon and informs such research" (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999, p. 228), each approach can have different ways of being reflexive and promoting understanding of complementary and contrasting issues when working with other qualitative methods.

Using a range of qualitative methods—even simply reviewing findings on a particular topic that have been created using another qualitative method—can have a variety of effects on researchers such as concern about the superficiality of one's work and doubts about compromised standards or methodological fidelity. Barbour (1998) concurs with a closely related point about the need to be aware of theoretical differences: "Even when we engage in a brief—or indeed prolonged—flirtation with other methods, we do not always acknowledge the extent to which they embody both different assumptions and different potential" (pp. 355-356). In contemporary research practice, it is reasonable to think that a common pattern in qualitative psychology is to work successively, rather than simultaneously, on research that uses very different methods and frameworks. For example, adopting ideas from

interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) in grounded theory (GT) projects can be useful in challenging the latter's model-building and realist features. Articles such as Brocki and Wearden's (2006) critical analysis of IPA in health research also provide a valuable resource because they articulate substantive differences between IPA and GT methods.

Frost and colleagues (2010) provide one of the few rigorous examples of multiple practitioners using plural qualitative methods to analyse the same text. The four qualitative analysis methods employed were GT, IPA, Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA) and narrative analysis (NA). The project was driven by a central question of whether "the use of a single qualitative approach to access meaning in data raises questions about what the use of another method would have illuminated in the data" (p. 2). Frost et al. also speculated about the possibilities for presenting the results of different qualitative methods separately and in combination. On their own, the "different interpretations of data can provide views from different dimensions from which the one(s) of most relevance to the researcher can be extracted "(p. 3). In combination, these different approaches are described as "layers of interpretation" that "can provide an array of perspectives of participants' accounts of their experiences" (p. 3).

The study highlights sources of interpretative variation as well as the potential for greater analytical transparency in qualitative research, although the authors did not consider the methodological variation that would be introduced by each research assistant (RA) conducting their own interviews (i.e., rather than analysing one text). The focus on analysing separate interviews with the RAs (e.g., without the addition of a focus group with all the RAs) meant that the authors did not examine similarities and differences in the RAs' interpretations of the interview transcript. While one can

imagine practical reasons why the different practitioners of the four main qualitative research approaches in psychology did not also conduct their own interviews, nevertheless this constraint artificially reduced further sources of difference and competence which emerge when researchers collect data and analyse their results using different methods and contrasting theoretical frameworks. In addition, the report did not indicate whether theoretical advances could be achieved by "comparing findings derived from different qualitative methods" or "seeking to compare the findings of separate qualitative studies" (Barbour, 1998, p. 359). However, their study implies that there need not be one account, reading, interpretation or explanatory theory that dominates at the end of a pluralistic investigation. In this respect, their work is consistent with other attempts to challenge realist features of the triangulation picture. Richardson (2000), for instance, presents an alternative metaphor of crystallization which Ellingson (2009) has, in turn, elaborated for qualitative practitioners.

Triangulation plays a central role in attempts to combine quantitative and qualitative research methods that also play down paradigm inconsistencies. However, an important question is whether triangulation helps to represent the many and complex positions or perspectives generated by mixed qualitative research, as indicated by Frost's (2009) remark: "pluralism of analysis offers a form of within-method triangulation that encourages the viewing of data from several perspectives" (p. 24). In Frost et al.'s (2010) previously mentioned examination of the differences generated by independent researchers using different methods (i.e., analytical procedures) with the same transcript, the resulting presentation (or picture) of textual interpretation invites a realist reading. While the example does not address whether it is possible or indeed desirable to make sense of messy differences generated by

between-method triangulation, it is clear to many qualitative researchers that searching for significant patterns and sources of meaningful agreement and disagreement contrasts with the complexity and diversity of personal and social life (i.e., even when a very homogeneous group or specific text is investigated).

Convergent data, voices, positions, perspectives and interpretations resulting from the use of different methods is only one of several features of triangulation. Farmer, Robinson, Elliott and Eyles (2006) note that in practice most qualitative researchers use an undocumented intuitive approach to triangulation, rather than a procedural or intersubjective approach such as team discussion. Thus even with explicitly documented and prescriptive triangulation procedures, it cannot be assumed that "mixing methods within qualitative research is unproblematic" (Barbour, 1998, p. 353). It is not clear whether many of the researchers who attempt to combine qualitative methods are preoccupied by triangulation procedures, although Denzin (2010) suggests there is a consensus that "the use of triangulation should operate according to certain ground rules, including, always beginning from the same theoretical model, and choosing methods and empirical materials that compliment (sic) that perspective" (p. 423). Again there is little discussion of whether the metaphor of triangulation—which Bryman (2007) describes as unhelpful for integrated reporting mixed quantitative-qualitative research—is transferable to qualitative-qualitative research.

While realist pictures of convergence upon a common reality are potentially misleading when representing mixed methods research, realism nevertheless has an allure, or hold, depending on one's background. With GT conceptualised in realist rather than pragmatist terms (Moran, 2007), the scientific integrity of having a means of inferring the best explanation is emphasised (Haig, 2005). On this account, theory

generation is abductive—rather than deductive or inductive—because identified, robust patterns provide the evidential basis for elaborating plausible models of phenomena. Theories which identify potential generative mechanisms are then evaluated against criteria of explanatory coherence: explanatory breadth, simplicity, and analogy (Haig, 2005). Combined with triangulation procedures, this realist approach presents a formidable, almost undeniable, means of securing scientific status for GT as a specific qualitative research method. But whether it is reasonable to position one qualitative method as more scientific than any other, even unintentionally, is controversial. Using an additional qualitative method such as DA with GT but *without* endorsing realism and explanatory coherence could easily be devalued and the list of methods that could combine with GT might be too restrictive for many qualitative researchers. Potential grounds for rejecting or demoting DA in a hierarchy of methods that could be used with GT might then include the following: DA favours coherence without strong empirical foundations in reality, emphasises description over explanation, promotes linguistic fetishism or encourages elaborative rather than elucidatory interpretations.

However, mixed qualitative method research may, to transfer a phrase from the specific rhetorical context of Frost (2009), "resemble triangulation methods in its ambition to view data from different perspectives, seeking not to verify meanings but to add texture to the interpretation of them" (p. 10). For instance, Morse (2003) briefly describes how a grounded theory study could be followed by a phenomenological study, with the prescription that "all procedures used in each method must adhere to, and be consistent with, the method selected" (p. 201). In contrast, Haig (2005) does not discuss the potential value of combining GT with other quantitative or qualitative methods.

Reflexivity and methodological plurality in combinations of different qualitative methods

It is important to acknowledge forms of reflexivity that are particular to distinct qualitative methods which apply to all research stages. With GT, for example, Charmaz (2006) notes that reflexivity is a constant requirement that may result in "questioning one's perspectives and practices" (p. 68). In collecting (and presumably analysing) data, Charmaz writes that "researchers need to be constantly reflexive about the nature of the questions and whether they work for the specific participants and the nascent grounded theory" (p. 32). Others committed to this approach, such as Mruck and Mey (2007), offer detailed suggestions about how to do GT reflexively without being prescriptive. Plurality is addressed in Charmaz's (2006) comment that "certain research problems indicate using several combined or sequential approaches" (p. 15). By implication, methodological plurality is intrinsic to grounded theory: "The logic of grounded theory guides your *methods of data-gathering* as well as of theoretical development" (p. 16). However, there appears to be no explicit account of how and why grounded theory might be combined with other qualitative methods.

IPA qualitative researchers advocate self-reflection and self-critical thinking primarily by keeping "a reflexive diary that records details of the nature and origin of any emergent interpretations" (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008, p. 217). The aim is to adopt an approach that "best captures the essence of the person's thoughts and emotions about the experience of the phenomenon being explored" (p. 218) by including the experiences of the interviewer and cultivating a "person-professional awareness" (p. 221), often in discussion with others. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) outline further IPA-related forms of reflexivity in theoretical remarks based on Heidegger's account of forestructures of interpretation. A questioning and abstract

interpretative approach is adopted towards the original text and this is documented to enable stronger interpretative claims to be checked, while recognizing also that "this type of reflexive engagement will vary from analyst to analyst and from project to project" (p. 90). Strategies for deconstructing the text are promoted along with general recognition that the bracketing of preconceptions means that "a consideration of Heidegger's complex and dynamic notion of fore-understanding helps us to see a more enlivened form of bracketing as both a cyclical process and as something which can only be partially achieved" (p. 25).

With narrative approaches in psychology, research processes and results are regarded as constructed narratives, meaning that "writers need to produce an analytic discussion of how their own theoretical and biographical perspective might impact on their relationships with research subjects, their interpretation of research evidence, and the form in which the research is presented" (Elliot, 2005, p. 155). Riessman (2008) emphasises similar points and gives the specific recommendation for "students to keep a diary, or log, of decisions and inferences made during the course of a research project" (p. 191). She argues that this "fosters ongoing reflexivity—critical self-awareness about how the research was done and the impact of critical decisions along the way" (p. 191). There is no specific treatment of the potential to combine narrative methods with other qualitative methods. Nevertheless, much of Riessman's account of narrative methods accords with the broader sense of reflexivity in which the relevance and limits of a method and its theory are important considerations.

With discourse analysis there is a rich tradition of reflexivity which incorporates sociology of scientific knowledge studies that encourage new forms of writing and rhetorical *and* reflexive self-legitimation. However, much of the work appears to be reflexive in a clarifying and defensive manner, with self-examination

serving to strengthen and refine discourse analysis against competing qualitative methods. Nevertheless, Potter and Hepburn (2008) describe discourse analysis as a "reflexively mature practice" (p. 277), not only because "any conclusions may apply just as much to the researcher's own discourse as the discourse under study" (p. 276-277) but also because there is a genuine attempt "to counter or improve on or reinterpret analyses from alternative perspectives that work with assumptions that are realist, positivist, symbolic interactionist, social cognitionist or whatever" (p. 277). This delimitation includes critical discourse analysis because the Foucauldian notion of discourse it is based on is too broad in its inclusion of language, practices and physical structures (Potter & Hepburn, 2008). Critical discourse analysis is therefore regarded as a partially overlapping but separate intellectual practice in which reflexivity is construed differently as "an awareness of the formative powers that accrue to the historical and disciplinary location from which the researcher speaks; formative powers which must be accounted for in the analyses such researchers will go on to offer" (Hook, 2005, p. 23).

All of these qualitative methods highlight their distinctive features and demonstrate an ongoing commitment to refining their methods and analytical frameworks. Without exception, however, their accounts of reflexivity do not include reflection on potential combinations with other approaches. Similarly, Finlay and Gough's (2003) exploration and illustration of different senses of personal, interpersonal and deconstructive reflexivity does not examine substantive conceptual connections between reflexivity and plurality. Gough's (2003) survey and overview of different forms of reflexivity is better because it implies that discourse analytic and psychoanalytic research methods can be used without contradiction or incoherence. However, he does not articulate the grounds for recommending "some balance between the extremes of unreflexive, 'flat' description, which presents a supposedly 'objective' picture of the phenomenon, and convoluted, meta-reflexivity textual

presentations, which move too far away from the phenomenon in question" (p. 32). In the approach based on Wittgenstein's later philosophy, a broad reflexivity might be achieved by assembling examples of language that appears to be flat, ordinary and descriptive *as well as* metapsychological accounts in order to work through the words and pictures that qualitative psychologists invoke to justify their research practices.

Pictures of methodological pluralism in qualitative psychology: combining discursive psychology and psychoanalytic methods

Wittgenstein's philosophical method has argued to play a role in encouraging alternative pictures that are "equally valid" (Hutchinson & Read, 2008, p. 157) but less likely to generate conceptual problems. In addition, it is also possible to identify and challenge pictures that are evoked when discussing issues of reflexivity, epistemology and ontology. For example, in relation to discursive psychology, Potter (2010) appears to adopt a Wittgensteinian position and method in responding to criticism that discursive psychology is not sufficiently reflexive and focuses on epistemological rather than ontological concerns. Specifically, in challenging the previously mentioned conduit picture of language, Potter emphasises discursive psychology's "reflexive attention to methodological issues, and the close ties it weaves between theory, object, and analysis, that lead it to its distinct methodological position" (p. 668).

The focus of discursive psychology on strengthening its distinctive methodological position contrasts, however, with the plurality that is increasingly evident in psychology. Although discursive psychologists refer to Wittgenstein's philosophy and their own weave of theory, object and analysis, they appear to be disinterested in using the methods of other approaches, such as psychoanalytically-inspired psychosocial methods. In this last section, Wittgensteinian remarks on

psychoanalysis will be used to explore issues that arise when mixed methods research includes psychosocial methods. This is possible because Wittgenstein engaged positively with Freud's work and identified only specific conceptual objections. The psychosocial trend in qualitative research, exemplified by Frosh and Emerson (2005), shows an openness to pluralism in such remarks as: "psychoanalytic concepts add meaning to discursive approaches by offering explanations of motivation and 'location' that are not available without such concepts" (p. 311). Frosh and Emerson emphasise the importance of a dialogue between discursive and psychoanalytical-psychosocial theoretical interpretations when interviewers ask about and analyse their interviewees' previously unexamined and deep features of investment, defence and the unconscious.

A vital question, however, is whether the pluralistic inclusion of talk of extra-discursive or pre-discursive features of psychic life and use of theory-based criteria to identify unconscious thoughts and feelings requires tacit acceptance of the requisite psychoanalytic ontology. Surely this leads back to a realist picture of mental life or, at the very least, constitutes an instance of methodological pluralism that is inconsistent with a Wittgensteinian approach? Confirming his critical stance towards Freudian psychoanalysis, Wittgenstein remarked: "New regions of the soul have not been discovered, as his writings suggest" (as cited in Gunnarsson, 2005). Although Wittgenstein might appear to dismiss psychoanalysis with the remark that a subconscious realm is "just *a mode of representation*", nevertheless he "did not want to cast doubt upon the talk of unconscious thoughts, but upon a picture of such thoughts that holds us captive" (Gunnarsson 2005, p. 274). Wittgenstein's remarks do not imply an in principle rejection of combining psychoanalytic methods and an analysis of language as long as any picture of the unconscious has been worked

through. Reflecting present concerns, it is plausible that psychoanalytic interpretations could be used in the practices of psychosocial research to overcome a kind of superficiality or, at the very least, collusion in avoidance and repression (Billig, 1999) that can occur between interviewer and interviewee. Moreover, talking with others about what is unspeakable or unsayable as part of a research investigation need not be engaged in primarily to establish the objectivity, truth or reality of unconscious conflicts.

But what grounds are there for thinking that Wittgenstein would allow the type of psychosocial and discourse analytic combination mentioned by Frosh and Emerson? Wittgenstein's remarks on Freud's interpretations from published case study material show how conceptual analysis can be used to critically assess explanations that purport to reveal the hidden reality of a psychological phenomenon. In a situation analogous to a reader who questions the interpretation of an exemplar in a qualitative report, Wittgenstein challenged Freud's interpretation of the real meaning of a flowering branch in a female patient's dream resided in its unconscious phallic associations (Cioffi, 2007, p. 181). What Wittgenstein objected to was "Freud's assumption that the correctness of his interpretation impugned her own view that the dream was 'beautiful'" (p. 183). In this case, Freud's patient subsequently "ceased to take pleasure in her dream as a result of his having persuaded her that there was a causal relationship between her shameful sexual desires and her sense of exaltation at the beauty of her dream" (p. 183). The lesson of great importance to novel mixed-method qualitative research is that clarity is needed about when it is better to seek a further description of an experience from a participant, rather than provide an explanation which purports to reveal the reality of that experience.

The example fits with Frosh and Emerson's (2005) view of psychological explanations in a critical social psychology in which "psychoanalytic interpretive strategies" are used and "may (or perhaps must) involve introducing a reflexive process in which interpretations might be tested within the text itself, treating them as discursive constructions the effects of which can be examined and discussed" (p. 322). The contribution of a Wittgensteinian challenge to the picture of unconscious conflicts is the suggestion that any deeper theoretical interpretation must be explored *with* the person. This is not a denial that there is something real and important that emerges from the complex interaction between an interviewer and interviewee that can be enhanced by new concepts and theories. Rather, it is an acknowledgement that it is crucial to engage with the details and messiness that emerges when different methods are combined, without being preoccupied by pictures internal to the language of those methods, their containing or guiding theories and accounts of how coherence might be better achieved. Hopefully qualitative psychologists with an interest in combining their work with other approaches can benefit from this analysis *and* seek to work through their reflexively generated concerns using relevant features of Wittgenstein's later philosophical method and writings as a resource.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to use Wittgenstein's later philosophy and use an underexamined feature of his work—the role of pictures in linguistic practices—to encourage reflexivity within psychology about potentially misleading ways of representing the plural use of methods in psychology by individuals or research teams. Mixing methods in psychological research has been conceived as an integrative stance in which quantitative and qualitative methods are mixed within a pragmatist framework. In contrast, eclectic combinations of methods might have some

pragmatic benefits but also lead to considerable theoretical contradictions. Valsiner's position on quantitative approaches as the outcome of qualitative processes was presented as part of a more complex rapproachment within psychology. Breaking down rigid distinctions between quantitative and qualitative methods does not, however, guarantee that the results from mixed method research will be coherent. For that reason, a broad reflexivity was advocated for quantitative-qualitative research that contrasts with the pragmatist stance towards methodological plurality.

In a further contrast with pragmatism, it was claimed that the pictures internal to accounts of quantitative-qualitative and now in qualitative-qualitative research—such as those connected with triangulation—often evoke or invoke a realist philosophical framework. Examples of a several sequential and simultaneous qualitative methodological combinations were then explored to demonstrate how combined approaches reveal competing, complementary, overlapping or fragmented layers, levels, perspectives or aspects of social psychological phenomena. Versions of reflexive work and reflexivity from prominent (i.e., distinct) qualitative methods were examined. Few proponents of particular methods articulated explicit connections between reflexivity and plurality. The main exception (and example of within-method triangulation) was argued to be Frost et al.'s (2010) study of plural use of qualitative methods. However, this study was argued to artificially limit sources of between-method messiness and inadvertently evoke realism. In contrast, an explicitly realist form of GT was discussed in which the generation of abductive explanations is central while the value of combinations with other "less scientific" qualitative methods appears to be limited. Despite the scientific status such a realist framework bestows upon some forms of qualitative research, it also appears to undermine the potential contribution of conceptual analyses of methods (i.e., the application of any form of

grammatical elucidatory or therapeutic philosophical approach to conceptual problems that arise when using multiple methods in psychology *and* when talking about and picturing how combinations of methods can be used in psychology and related disciplines).

Pictures internal to multi-method triangulation were then examined and alternatives such as crystallization were acknowledged as alternative ways of making sense of the complexity and messiness generated by combining qualitative approaches. In contrast to the allure (or hold) of realist ontology and the view that all pictures are equally valid, the analysis focused on the use of interpretations of unconscious conflicts grounded in discursive data in psychosocial research. Frosh and Emerson's challenge to discursive psychology to include psychoanalytic interpretive strategies was found—perhaps surprisingly to some readers—to be compatible with Wittgenstein's philosophical working through of a misleading picture of the unconscious as a kind of inner "region" in a specific criticism of a Freudian interpretation. Wittgenstein's objection to Freud's interpretation of the real meaning of a dream opened up the same possibility discussed by Frosh and Emerson; namely, that the theory and method of psychoanalysis can generate new layers and depths of interpretation in combination with other methods when conducting predominantly qualitative and discursive research in psychology. This rapprochement can be achieved not by offering a theoretical explanation of the real meaning of the participant's remarks, but rather through identifying misleading pictures *and* by seeking further descriptions in conversation with a participant.

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